

Sharon Overheard

This scenario was prepared by the Center for Ethics, Responsibilities, and Values,
College of Saint Catherine, St. Paul, Minn.

Position One: Let Him Know

You are Sharon Thot, a manufacturing manager at a medical products company called Medical Technologies. At a meeting of a local engineering society you talk with a person you used to work with at another company. You have both moved to other companies but have maintained a casual friendship over the years. As you talk, two other people known to your friend come up and join the conversation. As the conversation develops, it turns out that one of the latter two, Daniel Johnson, works on a process similar to one to which you have just been assigned. Daniel has a few drinks and is naturally an expansive, open individual. During the conversation he begins to explain, in some detail, how he has successfully overcome a major obstacle to successful utilization of the process, and how it has resulted in a bonus for him.

You decide to inform him that you are a competitor working on the same process.

Defend your position.

Position Two: Keep It a Secret

You are Sharon Thot, a manufacturing manager at a medical products company called Medical Technologies. At a meeting of a local engineering society you talk with a person you used to work with at another company. You have both moved to other companies but have maintained a casual friendship over the years. As you talk, two other people known to your friend come up and join the conversation. As the conversation develops, it turns out that one of the latter two, Daniel Johnson, works on a process similar to one to which you have just been assigned. Daniel has a few drinks and is naturally an expansive, open individual. During the conversation he begins to explain, in some detail, how he has successfully overcome a major obstacle to successful utilization of the process, and how it has resulted in a bonus for him.

You decide not to tell him what you do and you encourage discussion about his work.

Defend your position.